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# CONFERENCE *connection*

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SOUTHEAST CONFERENCE, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

March 16, 2020



## COVID-19 Information

### Support for Clergy and Church Leaders

Clergy/Church leaders are invited to connect via Zoom to share how they and their churches are coping with the COVID-19 Virus. Situations vary across the Southeast Conference. But situations also keep changing!

Feel free to register and attend any (or all) of the meetings as we hear from each other.

- [Tuesday, March 17 - 10:00 a.m. - Noon Eastern Time](#)
- [Thursday, March 19 - 6:00-8:00 p.m. Eastern Time \\*](#)
- [Tuesday, March 24 - 10:00 a.m. - Noon Eastern Time \\*](#)
- [Tuesday, March 24 - 6:00-8:00 p.m. Eastern Time \\*](#)

- Thursday, March 26 - 10:00 a.m. - Noon Eastern Time \*

\* For the sessions from March 19-26, you can also call in using the number 646-558-8656 and the meeting ID: 409 025 0821

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## Example Local Church COVID Policy Document

Beloved Community Church, Birmingham AL has created a helpful document as they considered how to respond to the COVID-19 virus. It presents various responses they will take depending on which “stage” of outbreaks exists in their area. Other churches have found this helpful. If you are interested, [download here](#).

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## A Special Facebook Group

We have a new Facebook Group for our clergy and local church lay leadership: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/654449305307321/>. The group provides an asynchronous online forum to ask questions of each other, share experiences, make suggestions, offer support, etc.

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## Stop and Take a Deep Breath

by Rev. Char Burch, Transitional Conference Minister

I don't know about you, but I have had to say that to myself more than once in recent days. There is so much information about COVID-19; changing situations; decisions need to be made based on speculation of what might be; and so much anxiety in the air. I find that when I stop and take a deep breath, my stomach muscles relax and I can more easily move forward.

Several of our churches have suspended worship – at least for a few weeks - in order to protect individuals and help contain the virus. This is often the most responsible thing to do and you have my full support in doing this!!! Other churches are modifying schedules, meetings, etc. These are meant to both encourage those who are vulnerable to stay home (sometimes we think we are invincible) and to protect those about whom we care.

I find myself asking the question “how are we to “be church” in these times?



Obviously, for some churches, technology can help as worship services are streamed online. There are some specific suggestions and worship ideas on the UCC website at [www.ucc.org/worship\\_worship-ways](http://www.ucc.org/worship_worship-ways). Also, please know that Rev. Susan Blain, National UCC Minister for Worship & Gospel Art, has informed us that OneLicense is offering free licenses to churches in light of the coronavirus so that they can legally stream their music. Here is the link to their website: <https://www.onelicense.net/how-it-works>).

For some churches, being the church means using old technology and the telephone to actually make phone calls to those who are isolated and mailing copies of sermons and prayers to those who do not have email or computer. This is an important connection!

I also want to lift up our, chaplains and pastoral counselors who have a special role in addressing the anxiety, not just of patients/clients, but of staff within offices and hospitals. Thank you for this special ministry! And of course, Holy Week and Easter are not far away. Perhaps the situation will improve by then – or maybe not. So I know that clergy and church leaders have this on their minds. Be sure to see the information below on opportunities for clergy/church leaders to join together for conversation via Zoom.

In the midst of all of this, I would encourage us to be kind to each other and those we meet. Fear and anxiety takes over our emotions which easily lead to anger, frustration, over-reactions, and exhaustion. We cannot control some things. But we can respond with kindness and assurance of God's presence and love. We also need to be kind to ourselves! We try our best to be responsible and caring, but we are not perfect.

As we continue through the season of Lent, a season that invites reflection on the spirit and power of Jesus, let us take extra time to be grounded in our faith. We read the words "do not be afraid" many times in the Bible. It is the reminder of God's constant presence no matter what! May you feel that presence and God's peace through this challenging time.

Blessings! - Char

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## Email Scams

As you know, our society is inundated with email scams. I was recently informed that there is one that supposedly comes from me requesting that gift cards be bought. I and other Conference staff will never request that someone purchase gift cards! Be alert to such scams. If an email does not sound like "a normal" email message, it is probably a scam. - Char Burch

## From the Moderator: “Thank You!”

by Rev. J.R. Finney, Moderator

Let me begin with “Thank You.” Thanks for your faithfulness in your financial support of the Conference through OCWM giving. Your support has made it possible for the Conference staff to continue providing support to our churches during this very difficult time of transition. As a result of your faithful support, the state of our Southeast Conference is improving; and for the first time in many years, the Conference ended with a modest surplus instead of a deficit. We invite every church in our Conference to join us in ministry to the wider church through your financial support.



It is our desire to build upon that recent improvement. Therefore, after much prayer and deliberation, and considering both the financial realities and the needs of the Conference going forward, the SEC Board of Directors will be presenting a proposal to the Annual Meeting that calls for the calling of a full-time settled Conference Minister with part-time administrative support. We believe this proposal presents the best option for our Conference at this critical time. There will be opportunities to discuss this proposal at the Annual Meeting prior to voting on it.

I want to take this opportunity to thank our incredible Conference staff: Associate Conference Minister Rev. Heather Fosburgh; Generosity Coordinator Min. Carrole Moss; and Communications Director Don Harris. Also, a huge thanks to our Transitional Conference Minister Rev. Char Burch for her much needed leadership and ministry in our Conference at a critical time during our transition. I’m thankful that she has agreed to continue in her capacity until this transition is complete.

On a personal note, as my tenure as Conference Moderator comes to a close at the Annual Meeting, even with the tremendous changes and huge challenges our Conference has experienced in the last 4 years, it is has been my great honor to serve as Moderator. I look forward to serving our Conference in other ways.

Blessings ...  
J.R. Finney

## News from the Conference Office

### From the Generosity Coordinator

by Min. Carrole Moss, Generosity Coordinator

I Pray that this finds all of you well and healthy. Psalm 91:1-2 teaches: *"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty, I will say to the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: My God; in him will I trust."*

My prayer is that we are heeding the advice of the CDC and not the person down the street or on the internet. Our conference has been vigilant with dispensing the information that we really need. I am so grateful to have caring Denomination and a Conference who is concerned about our needs and is willing to put the needs of its people first and foremost in their thoughts and actions.



To all of you who expressed an interest in, or applied for a Transforming Churches Transforming Lives grant for Spring 2020, we say: **THANK YOU.** The Committee will be meeting soon and you will be notified of the decisions. We are here to help!

Thank you for all the ways you continue to support this Southeast Conference United Church of Christ. Without your support, we would **NOT** be able to continue to do this work. We are so grateful to all of you for all that **YOU** do to ensure that we continue to be that beacon of light in dark places. **"AND THEY WILL KNOW THAT WE ARE CHRISTIANS BY OUR LOVE".**

In times such as these, let us continue to let our light shine and our love continue to flow...heart to heart!

Continued blessings, as we Journey **TOGETHER.**



## Clergy Wellness Retreat

A week ago, 50 Clergy and Spouses gathered at the DuBose Conference Center in Monteagle, TN for a few days of building collegiality, reflection, and relaxation! Wonderful conversations! We are grateful to the UCC Pension Boards for their investment in the spiritual, physical, emotional, and financial wellness of our clergy! Thank you to the Planning Team of Charmaine Penn Johnson, Clarice Mitchell, Eddie Colf, Jan and Karl Whiteman. Also, thank you to Art Cribbs, our keynote presenter, and Martha Cruze and Frank Loiacono of the UCC Pension Boards. [View more photos on our website.](#)

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## Southeast Conference Annual Meeting

**Mark your calendar and join us for our Southeast Conference Annual Meeting. June 19-20, Montgomery, Alabama.**

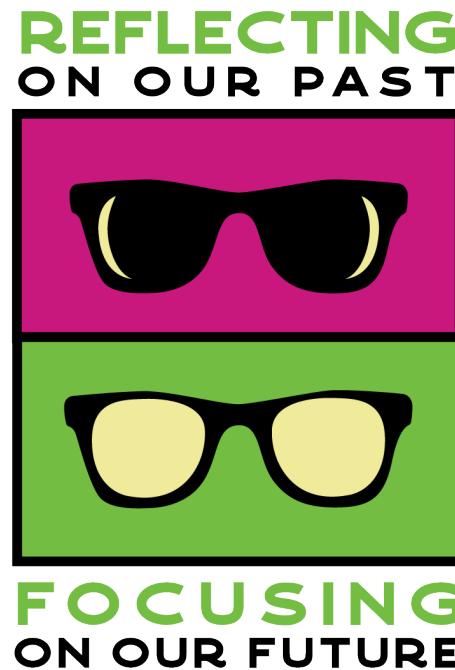
Expect to be motivated and challenged by our keynote and opening preacher - The Rev. Traci Blackmon, UCC Associate General Minister for Local Church and Justice Ministries. Anticipate being inspired by special music and

workshops. We are also excited to include a youth program for all ages.

[Registration is now live!](#)

Check the [Conference website](#) for more details as things evolve!

*Just to let you know - if COVID-19 continues to be a concern into the month of June, plans are in process to hold the meeting virtually. If so, registration fees that have been paid will be refunded.*



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## Calling all Specialized Ministers!!

Specialized Ministers are invited to be in conversation via Zoom on Tuesday, March 31: 9:30 am Eastern Time. This is a continuation of the conversation begun in February. All Specialized Ministers are welcome!!

[Register Online!](#)

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## Grant Funds Available for Immigration Ministries

The Southeast Conference has been provided with a \$500 grant from the National setting of the UCC to support the ministry of the Conference or Conference churches that are addressing issues of immigration. Because there is not a Conference-wide effort in this area, local churches are invited to apply for some of these funds. Community ministries do not qualify. If interested in applying for some of these funds, simply send an email to [cburch@secucc.org](mailto:cburch@secucc.org), identifying the church and how the funds would be used. The amount of money granted will depend on the number of requests. Deadline to apply is March 31, 2020.

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## Prayer List

We are continuing the process of praying for authorized ministers, congregations, and ministry groups throughout 2020. We encourage you to include these prayer requests in your local church newsletter, share them with your prayer circle, and include them in your own prayers.

### Week of March 15

- First Congregational UCC; Atlanta, Georgia
- Common Global Ministries and all mission personnel
- Thomas Baird
- Robert Foreman
- Cheryl Slusser

### Week of March 22

- New Hope Congregational Christian; Clio, Alabama
- Southeast Conference Staff
- Cindy L Bovee-Kemper
- Aubra Love
- Tom Mozley
- Alan Ballentine

### Week of March 29

- Deer Lodge Congregational UCC; Deer Lodge, Tennessee
- James Banks
- Marie Fortune
- Laurie Robins
- Jeane Spoor

## Churches in Transition

Central Congregational, Atlanta, GA; First Congregational, Savannah GA;  
Trinity Congregational, Athens AL; Peace Church, Clemson SC

### News from the Wider Church



## One Great Hour of Sharing® Sunday is March 22

One Great Hour of Sharing® is one of four special mission offerings of the United Church of Christ. This Lenten Offering supports the disaster, refugee, and development ministries of the UCC. The suggested offering date for the One Great Hour of Sharing offering is March 22, 2020. Visit the UCC website for resources: <https://www.ucc.org/oghs>.

## Looking Ahead: Vacation Bible School

Global Ministries has just released the new *Together in Unity VBS curriculum* which invites children to learn from and about partners in the Southern Asia region. Utilizing Global Ministries Vacation Bible School (VBS) resources are a great way to engage children in a relationship building experience that connects them with the Global Church.

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## New Executive Director at PATHWAYS

PATHWAYS Theological Education has announced that Sonya J. Vann, MDiv. has been hired as the new Executive Director for the organization. Vann earned a Master of Divinity degree from Eden Theological Seminary in May of 2015, graduating with Honors. Currently enrolled in the Doctor of Ministry Program at Eden, she is focused on the development of A Womanist Pedagogy of Communal Empowerment through Personal Narrative that engages cultural and ethnic experiences of the arts to inform faith formation and the development of materials for a progressive theological framework in African American settings. Sonya is an Associate Minister on staff at Christ the King United Church of Christ in Florissant, MO. She also served as Sabbatical Pastor of First Congregational Church of Webster Groves in the summer of 2017. She was the first African American woman in the history of this congregation to serve as Senior Pastor. [Read more here.](#)

## News from our Local Congregations



## Birmingham Churches Plan Joint UCC Maundy Thursday Service

by J.R. Finney

First Congregational Christian Church (UCC) in Birmingham will be hosting Birmingham's Joint UCC Maundy Thursday Service. The 4 Birmingham Pastors, Reverend Jennifer Sanders - Beloved, Reverend J R Finney II - Covenant, Reverend Dorinda Broadnax-First, and Reverend Paul Eknes-Tucker-Pilgrim, along with key personnel from First Congregational met for breakfast, fellowship and to plan the upcoming service.

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## Fighting for voting rights, Georgia church is among those suing state

by Hans Holznagel, UCC Staff

Around the time they vote in the March 24 Georgia primary, members of **Virginia-Highland Church, United Church of Christ**, had also hoped to be face-to-face with state election officials in court.

Voter registration outside Virginia-Highland ChurchAlong with several organizations that care about voting rights, the Atlanta church has sued, alleging the state of Georgia has suppressed votes through an unjust purge of registration rolls and other kinds of mismanagement. A trial in federal district court was originally scheduled for March 23.

But the trial has been delayed – maybe until fall – because the defendants have refused to turn over documents essential to the case, said the Rev. Matt Laney, the church's senior pastor. "It appears to be a stalling technique," he said. "The court made it clear that it does not want any further delays in the proceedings." [Read the full article on the UCC website.](#)



## Michael Malcom Named to Grist 50

Rev. Michael Malcom was recently selected as one of Grist 50 of rising stars for 2020 (and "Member's Pick"). Grist finds emerging leaders who are cooking up the boldest, most innovative solutions to save our planet. They call these forward-thinking phenoms *Fixers*. This year, Grist started with 1,000 nominations and selected 50 people who are shaking up environmental policy, the food system, the clean-energy sector, art, commerce, and more. These talented, hard-working, spectacular folks give us hope for the future.

Malcom writes, "I am humbled because I was recommended for this honor. Thank you to those that have mentored, nurtured, and been patient with in my becoming. A special honor to Rev Kate McGregor Moseley, Dr Adrienne Hollis, Kathy Egland, Jacqui Patterson, Danna Smith, Rev Dr Gerald Durley, Rev Jim Antal, Rev Dr Brooks Berndt, Rev Leo Woodberry, and Michael Hansen for your love, friendship, and guidance. Also, thank you to the many people who encourage me to continue to fight for justice and equity. You all are my real-life heroes. I am because we are, we are because I am. Let us continue to do great work to help our communities!" [Read more about Rev. Malcom's work here.](#)

## Training and Learning Opportunities



## Boundary Training for 2020

by Carrole Moss

### **HEALTHY BOUNDARIES POSTPONED!!!**

Healthy Boundary 101 scheduled for **March 21, 2020 in Macon, GA** has been postponed. We will attempt to reschedule in early fall. Our sincere apologies to all of you for any inconveniences this may have caused. If you had registered and paid the fee for this training, please contact the Southeast Conference office for a refund.

We look forward to seeing you in Montgomery, AL on June 18, 2020 for our next offering of Healthy Boundary 101. We will keep you posted as to registration dates and fees when this information is available.

## Conference Calendar

### **COVID-19 Support for Clergy and Church Leaders**

March 17 @ 10:00 a.m. - Noon EDT

### **COVID-19 Support for Clergy and Church Leaders**

March 19 @ 6:00-8:00 p.m. EDT

### **COVID-19 Support for Clergy and Church Leaders**

March 24 @ 10:00 a.m. - Noon EDT

### **COVID-19 Support for Clergy and Church Leaders**

March 24 @ 6:00-8:00 p.m. EDT

**COVID-19 Support for Clergy and Church Leaders**

March 26 @ 10:00 a.m. - Noon EDT

**Specialized Ministers Online Conversation**

March 31 @ 9:30 am - 11:00 am EDT

**Board of Directors Meeting**

April 2 @ 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm EDT

**Annual Meeting Planning Session**

April 13 @ 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm EDT

**Commission on Ministry Meeting**

April 16 @ 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm EDT

**SEC Annual Meeting**

June 19-20, 2020

Montgomery, AL

**National Youth Event**

July 22-25, 2020

Purdue University, IN

View the **full calendar** of events online: <https://www.secucc.org/events/>

**Contact Us**

Conference Minister: **Rev. Char Burch**; [cburch@secucc.org](mailto:cburch@secucc.org)

Assoc. Conf. Minister: **Rev. Heather Fosburgh**; [hfosburgh@secucc.org](mailto:hfosburgh@secucc.org)

Generosity Coordinator: **Min. Carrole Moss**; [cmoss@secucc.org](mailto:cmoss@secucc.org)

Director of Communications: **Don Harris**; [dharris@secucc.org](mailto:dharris@secucc.org)

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